



Capitol  
**NEWS**

# State Senator Martha G. Scott

## Information for the 2nd District

### Helpful Hints to Lower the High Costs of Winter

#### How To Reach Senator Scott

##### **Mailing Address**

Sen. Martha G. Scott  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI • 48909-7536

##### **Phone**

517-373-7748

##### **Toll-Free**

1-800-SCOTT-78  
1-800-726-8878

##### **Fax**

517-373-1387

##### **E-Mail**

SenMScott@senate.  
michigan.gov

##### **Website**

[www.senate.mi.gov/scott](http://www.senate.mi.gov/scott)

*Dear Friends,*

*As the winter season approaches, we look forward to snow-filled days and crystal-clear nights. We also anticipate greater energy usage, which leads to higher costs. To help, I have gathered information that may reduce heating bills during this time.*

*The State of Michigan and local energy providers have initiated several programs to aid low-income and senior households. These programs, if used properly, should ensure that no one is without heat this winter.*

*I urge you to share this newsletter with friends and relatives who do not live in the 2nd District. The listed programs are open to all Michigan residents no matter where they live.*

*I wish you all a warm winter, happy holidays, and a prosperous New Year!*

*Sincerely,*

**Martha G. Scott**  
State Senator

# Home Heating Credit

The Home Heating Credit is a state tax credit that can help offset the costs of natural gas or electricity used to heat homes in the winter. The Credit is based on household income, the number of exemptions claimed, and the home's actual heating costs. Special exemptions may be available to customers 65 and older and to people with disabilities.

You do not need to file a state income tax return to receive a Home Heating Credit. Households that received the credit last year are automatically eligible this year.

Application forms are available from mid-January through September 30 and may be obtained from the Department of Treasury, local Family Independence Agency (FIA) offices, or anywhere Michigan tax return forms can be found.

For more information, contact the FIA at (800) 292-5650.

# Energy Direct

The FIA recently unveiled Energy Direct, a new program aimed at avoiding energy shutoff notices for its clients. Several Metro-Detroit utility providers, including DTE, have collaborated to support the program.

The project will be tested from November 2004 to September 2005. Nearly 234,000 customers who receive assistance could benefit.

Under the pilot program, the FIA will match cash assistance clients against shutoff statements and will pay up to \$550 of the outstanding bill. Under terms of the agreement, the shutoff notice will not be

sent to the client's home and shutoff will be avoided for 30 days.

The FIA will notify clients when a shutoff notice has been paid and refer them to local weatherization services to help reduce their energy consumption in the future. FIA clients receiving Family Independence Program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Food Assistance Program benefits are eligible for Energy Direct.

Interested customers can call: (800) 292-5650.



# State Emergency Relief

The State Emergency Relief program is a crisis intervention plan that provides payment for heating fuel, electricity, and home repairs for low-income households. Administered by the FIA, program participation is based on the following criteria:

- Demonstration of immediate need (shutoff notice), or
- Declared need for a deliverable fuel such as fuel oil, or
- Verified need for energy-related home repair, and

- Income, and
- Assets.

For those who qualify, program payments are as follows:

- Heating fuel has an annual maximum of \$550 to \$1,100 depending on the fuel type. The maximum payment may change based on available funding.
- State energy-related home repairs have a \$1,500 lifetime limit per household.



# Weatherization Assistance Program

**M**ichigan's Weatherization Assistance Program provides free home energy conservation services to low-income homeowners and renters. These services reduce energy use and lower utility bills.

They include:

- Wall Insulation
- Attic Insulation and Ventilation
- Foundation Insulation



- Air Leakage Reduction
- Smoke Detectors
- Dryer Venting

Eligibility is based on federal poverty guidelines. Those who receive Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits or receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) automatically qualify for this no-cost program.

Only local weatherization organizations can make eligibility determinations for this program.

## Local Weatherization Organizations

City of Detroit –  
Dept. of Human Services  
(313) 887-1100

Wayne Metro Community  
Action Agency  
(313) 843-2550



# DTE's Winter Protection Plan

**T**he onset of winter signals the beginning of DTE's Winter Protection Plan. In effect from December 1 through March 31, the program protects seniors and low-income customers from service shutoff.

The key to this program is that customers must enroll **BEFORE** their energy service is shutoff. DTE will not negotiate accounts with interrupted service.

Under the protection plan, eligible customers must pay a portion of their estimated annual bill plus regular payments on any past-due bills. Customers are encouraged to make these monthly payments during the life of the program.



After the program end date of March 31, customers may see an increase in their bill payments to cover the winter charges. Interested customers can call DTE at (800) 477-4747.

To qualify, customers must meet at least one of the following requirements:

- Age 62 or older
- Receive Family Independence Agency (FIA) cash assistance
- Receive food stamps
- Receive Medicaid
- Household income at or below 150% of the poverty level





**State Senator**  
**Martha G. Scott**

P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536



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# Winter Weatherization Tips

- Install storm windows, or add caulking or sealant to existing windows to reduce the infiltration of cold air in the winter and warm air in the summer.
- Close drapes or blinds and lock windows to ensure a tight seal.
- Weather-strip the perimeter of exterior doors.
- Install insulation in your attic, walls (where accessible), and floors.
- Set water heater to 120 degrees and add an insulation blanket to the unit (check the manufacturer's label for important information).
- Add insulation to water pipes.
- Install low-flow shower heads and faucet aerators.
- Use conservation showerheads to eliminate hot water waste.
- Install dampers in chimneys.
- Replace filters in heating and cooling systems on a monthly basis.
- Check the direction of ceiling fans: in the winter, set fans to move air downward (counterclockwise); in the summer, set fans to move air upward (clockwise).
- Close the damper on fireplaces (when not in use) or add glass doors.
- Remove furniture and carpeting from heater vents to ensure proper circulation.
- Adjust the thermostat to slightly lower temperatures in the winter and slightly higher temperatures in the summer when your family is sleeping or away from the home.
- Replace old appliances with new energy-efficient models.
- Install Compact Florescent Light (CFL) bulbs.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, some people who have weatherized their home have saved an average of \$300 in annual utility costs while adding an estimated \$1,000 to the value of their home.

